

What is claimed is:

1. A heat and pressure consolidated laminate, comprising in superimposed relationship:

a decorative layer consisting essentially of a leather material;

a substrate, having a first surface and a second surface opposite one another;

an underlay layer, containing one or more cellulosic sheets impregnated with a thermosetting resin, the underlay layer disposed between the decorative layer and the first surface of the substrate; and

a backer layer containing one or more cellulosic sheets impregnated with a thermosetting resin, the backer layer disposed adjacent the second surface of the substrate.

2. The laminate of claim 1 wherein said decorative layer is bonded leather having a sheet thickness ranging from about 0.2 mm to about 4.0 mm.

3. The laminate of claim 1 wherein said thermosetting resin is a melamine formaldehyde resin.

4. The laminate of claim 1, wherein said substrate is either plywood, particleboard or medium density fiberboard.

5. The laminate of claim 1, further comprising an overlay layer disposed on a side of said decorative layer opposite the underlay layer and substrate.

6. A heat and pressure consolidated laminate, comprising in superimposed relationship:

a first decorative layer consisting essentially of a leather material;

a substrate, having a first surface and a second surface opposite one another;

a first underlay layer, containing one or more cellulosic sheets impregnated with a thermosetting resin, the first underlay layer disposed between the first decorative layer and the first surface of the substrate; and

a second decorative layer consisting essentially of a leather material; and

a second underlay layer, containing one or more cellulosic sheets impregnated with a thermosetting resin, said second underlay layer disposed between the second decorative layer and the second surface of the substrate.

7. The laminate of claim 6 wherein said first and second decorative layers are bonded leather, said first and second decorative layers each having a sheet thickness ranging from about 0.2 mm to about 4.0 mm.

8. The laminate of claim 6 wherein said thermosetting resin is a melamine formaldehyde resin.

9. The laminate of claim 6, wherein said substrate is either plywood, particleboard or medium density fiberboard.

10. A method for the production of a heat and pressure consolidated leather laminate comprising the steps of:

setting the temperature of a thermosetting press to a predetermined temperature;

stacking in a superimposed relationship a backing layer, a substrate, an underlay layer, a decorative layer comprised essentially of leather, and a release sheet;

inserting the stacked, superimposed layers into the thermosetting press;

increasing the pressure of the thermosetting press to a predetermined pressure;

maintaining the stacked layers in the heated, pressurized thermosetting press for a period of time sufficient to form a laminate;

removing the laminate from the thermosetting press; and

removing the release sheet from the laminate.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein said predetermined temperature ranges from about 110° C to about 250° C.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein said predetermined pressure ranges from about 250 PSI to about 450 PSI.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein said period of time sufficient to form a laminate ranges from about 20 seconds to about 150 seconds.

14. The method of claim 10, wherein said release sheet is textured to impart an embossed texture on the decorative layer.

15. A method for the production of a heat and pressure consolidated leather laminate comprising the steps of:

setting the temperature of the continuous thermosetting press to a predetermined temperature;

setting the pressure of the press to a predetermined pressure;

stacking in a superimposed relationship a backing layer, a substrate, an underlay layer, a decorative layer comprised essentially of leather, and a release sheet upstream from a continuous thermosetting press;

feeding the stacked, superimposed layers into the continuous thermosetting press;

maintaining the stacked layers in the heated, pressurized continuous thermosetting press for a period of time sufficient to form a laminate;

removing the laminate from the thermosetting press; and

removing the release sheet from the laminate.

16. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of transporting the laminate to handling equipment located downstream from the continuous thermosetting press.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein said predetermined temperature ranges from about 110° C to about 250° C.

18. The method of claim 16, wherein said predetermined pressure ranges from about 250 PSI to about 450 PSI.

19. The method of claim 16, wherein said period of time sufficient to form a laminate ranges from about 20 seconds to about 150 seconds.

20. A method for the production of a heat and pressure consolidated leather laminate comprising the steps of:

setting the temperature of the continuous thermosetting press to a predetermined temperature, said predetermined temperature ranging from about 110° C to about 250° C;

setting the pressure of the press to a predetermined pressure, said predetermined pressure ranging from about 250 PSI to about 450 PSI;

stacking in a superimposed relationship a backing layer, a substrate, an underlay layer, a decorative layer comprised essentially of leather, and a release sheet upstream from a continuous thermosetting press;

feeding the stacked, superimposed layers into the continuous thermosetting press;

selecting a line speed of the continuous thermosetting press that allows the stacked, superimposed layers to remain in the heated, pressurized press for a period of time sufficient to form a laminate from said layers;

removing the laminate from the thermosetting press; and

removing the release sheet from the laminate.